

Pandemic Recovery Plan: Resource Allocation

To: Planning and Priorities Committee (Special Meeting)

Date: 23 November, 2021

Report No.: 11-21-4202

Strategic Directions

- Create a Culture for Student and Staff Well-Being
- Allocate Human and Financial Resources Strategically to Support Student Needs
- Build Strong Relationships and Partnerships Within School Communities to Support Student Learning and Well-Being
- Transform Student Learning

Recommendation

It is recommended that the amount of \$5.9M from the Ministry of Education's COVID-19 support funding for the following school-based support staff, as presented in the report, be approved:

- (a) Allocate 16 FTE positions of Social Worker, in the amount of \$1.3M;
- (b) Allocate 35 FTE positions of Child and Youth Worker in the amount of \$1.9M;
- (c) Allocate 15 FTE positions of Child and Youth Counsellor in the amount of \$1.1M;
- (d) Allocate 40 FTE positions of School Based Safety Monitor in the amount of \$1.6M.

Context

The Covid-19 Pandemic Recovery Plan (see Appendix A) has provided areas of focus and targeted intervention plans to support students. Outlined in the plan is the recognition that it would only be after staff and students were back together and connecting in person that staff would have the opportunity to better understand where students are in terms of their learning, mental health and well being, and in other areas. There is a recognition in the Covid-19 Pandemic Recovery Plan that it is important to remain flexible and acknowledge we must be prepared to adapt plans to address any newly identified gaps, changing circumstances and/or in response to emerging data.

This report is focusing on the areas of the Covid-19 Pandemic Recovery Plan that support the Mental Health and Well-Being of students and will provide emerging data that identifies these gaps and changing circumstances. While all eight areas of focus within Covid 19 Pandemic Recovery Plan are interrelated there are three areas which deal most directly with student Mental Health and Well-Being:

1. Building Relationships and Enhancing Belonging

The efforts of staff, students and families working together to create positive school and classroom climates that fosters the mental health and well-being of all students is prioritized and ongoing.

2. Differentiated Supports

Welcoming back and prioritizing mental health and well being as we re-engage and integrate students who have been most impacted by the pandemic is essential. Intentional placement of Professional Support Staff in school communities, assessing needs throughout the year for mental health and wellness supports and collaborating with school communities will strengthen school engagement.

3. Staff Collaboration

Staff across the TDSB have developed innovative ways to interact and collaborate in different ways as they connect across the system for professional learning opportunities including online crisis support, mental health and well-being counselling and groups to better support all students.

In the beginning of September, Mental Health and Well Being supports included intentional resources and work on transitioning students back into school spaces, providing each school community with culturally responsive 7 weeks of daily well being activities for grades K-3; 4-8, 9-12 and students with special educational needs/complex needs to support building cultural safety, honouring student voices, experiences and identities, building classroom/school community and fostering positive relationship building with students. Professional Support Staff from Social Work and Child, Attendance Counselors and Youth Counsellors continue to create, lead and co-facilitate culturally responsive groups in school communities to address racialized trauma, individual and family brief counseling, supporting food/shelter security and working collaboratively with community partners to support re-engagement, attendance and transitions for students.

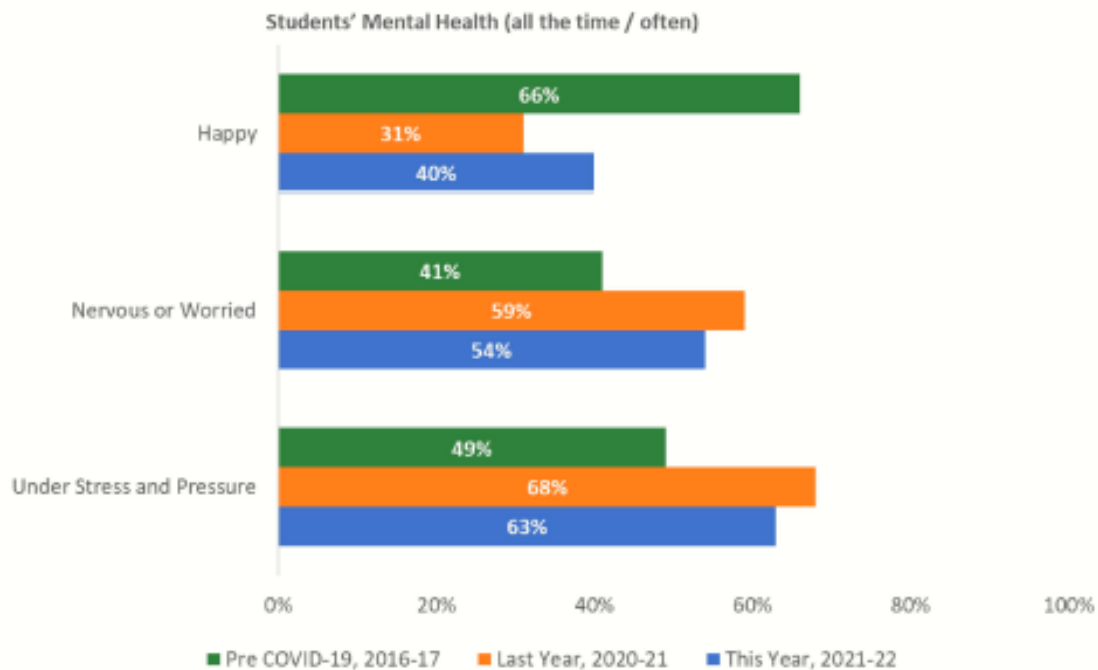
Emerging Data From the Field

1. Data From Student Learning Model Survey of Secondary School Students

As part of the survey of Secondary Students recently conducted to get feedback on the learning model there were a number of questions embedded in the survey related to Mental Health and Well Being. A total of 24,537 students responded to the survey which is a response rate of 33% of all secondary students. The survey revealed that mental health is still a concern and responses to key mental health items resemble similar patterns of past student check-in surveys during COVID-19.

Since September:

- Five out of ten students have reported feeling worried or nervous all the time or often (6/10 in January 2021)
- Six out of ten students reported feeling under a lot of stress or pressure all the time or often (7/10 in January 2021)
- Four out of ten students learning in-person reported feeling happy all the time or often, while three out of ten students learning virtually felt the same (3/10 in January 2021).
- Students in higher grades were more likely to report feeling nervous, worried or stressed, and less likely to report feeling happy.



2. Safe and Caring Schools Data

When looking at suspension and expulsion data over the last four year some patterns emerge. The data for these years has been examined for the time period ranging from the beginning of the school year until November 20 of the same year. The numbers in 2020-2021 are much lower than other years possibly due to learning conditions that were unique to the time (i.e. Covid-19 interruptions, virtual school)

The suspension numbers for this school year to date are much lower relative to 2018 and 2019. What is concerning is the number of incidents requiring 20 day suspensions this year. This number is much higher when compared to 2018 and 2019. This could perhaps speak to more serious incidents being confronted by Principals.

Year	Total # of Suspensions	Duration of Suspension		# Expulsion
September 1 to November 21, 2018	1514	1 day	669	8
		2 day	310	
		3 to 5 days	360	
		6 to 10 days	98	
		11 to 19 days	68	
		20 days	1	
September 1 to November 21, 2019	1580	1 day	647	8
		2 day	370	
		3 to 5 days	341	
		6 to 10 days	97	
		11 to 19 days	115	
		20 days	2	
September 1 to November 21, 2020	283	1 day	115	3
		2 day	66	
		3 to 5 days	56	
		6 to 10 days	24	
		11 to 19 days	19	
		20 days	0	
September 1 to November 21, 2021	889	1 day	329	8
		2 day	228	
		3 to 5 days	188	
		6 to 10 days	64	
		11 to 19 days	45	
		20 days	27	

3. Social Work Referrals

For this school year, in the month of September, Social Workers received 1072 referrals for socio-emotional support with the majority of requests for mental health counseling to address anxiety, low mood and socialization, food/financial security and transitional supports to re-engage back to schooling and 103 Attendance Referrals were received.

In October, 2021, Social Work referrals increased by 49% to 1602 referrals. Attendance Referrals increased by over 300% to 420 referrals; such increases do occur in attendance as student absences between 10-15 days become Attendance Referrals in October of the school year (For example, in 2000, Attendance Referrals increased by 250% between September and October).

The main focus continues to be requests for mental health counseling through brief counseling and social emotional learning although requests for Social Work support for crisis interventions for individual, classroom and school communities impacted by tragic events, food/financial security, connecting culturally relevant mental health community supports to students and caregivers/parents, case conferencing, supporting transitional and re-engagement supports for students, case management and supporting coping

and stress management to address anxiety, low mood, self-harm disclosures and strengthening social emotional learning have all increased this school year.

Comparing September and October 2020 with September and October 2021, both school years during the pandemic, there has been a:

- 86% increase in referrals for Social Work support
- 62% increase in referrals to Attendance Counselors and
- 14% increase in the hours spent on consultations.

This comparative increase is indicating the higher level of stress and trauma students, families, parents/caregivers and staff are experiencing this school year.

Overall, this school year, the referrals to Social Work and Attendance as well as Consultation Hours have increased. Social Workers are spending more time supporting crisis in school communities (student deaths, parent/caregiver deaths, racism, tragedies and impact of community violence on students and staff), connecting and supporting families/students to food/financial security resources and culturally responsive mental health community partners, addressing and supporting student anxiety, conducting risk assessments for self-harm, supporting capacity building for positive coping and stress management skills, case managing students who are on wait lists with mental health community agencies and supporting re-engagement to school of students experiencing mental health concerns.

Social Work Referrals for September and October 2020 and 2021

2020	Social Work Referrals	Attendance Referrals	Consultations (hrs.)
September	539	72	2048
October	902	251	3413
TOTAL	1441	323	5461

2021	Social Work Referrals	Attendance Referrals	Consultations (hrs.)
September	1072	103	2722
October	1602	420	3498
TOTAL	2674	523	6220

4. Qualitative Data From the Field

As Superintendents of Education work with the principals in the Learning Networks they are able to gather qualitative information about what emerging student needs are evident around mental health and well being and social emotional learning of students. We are gathering this evidence in order to identify emerging student needs. This data highlights the need for support around mental health and well being that is also evident in the data on Social Work Referrals and the Student Survey results. What is also reflected through the summary of emerging student needs is the need for support around social emotional learning needs as students are also struggling with relationships, social skills, conflict resolution, coping with stress and managing their emotions.

	Emerging Student Needs
Mental Health and Well- Being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A decrease in a sense of belonging - caring, nurturing and affirming community • The need for increased mental health support. • Anxiety/depression support • Mental Health struggles - suicide ideation, hopelessness, isolation, anxiety • Racial trauma • Lack of engagement in school • Increase in anxiety and depression for specific and also general reasons, many unrelated to school and schooling (about life)
Social Emotional Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social skills/healthy relationship development due to the pandemic and lockdown • Students need to support in reflecting on their own behaviour and acting proactively. We require a culture of mutual respect in schools. • Engaging/meaningful/culturally responsive learning that honors and integrates our students' lived experiences into the learning.
Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Safety Issues • Conflicts between students from K to 12 have increased significantly.
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increase in COVID related financial issues (i.e need basic items like good winter wear, eye glasses, nutrition support, hygiene products)

Action Plan and Associated Timeline

This is a recommendation to augment the current complement of Social Workers, Child and Youth Workers, Child and Youth Counsellors and School Based Safety Monitors. While there has been intentional ongoing work by teachers, administrators and other staff around Mental Health and Well Being, it is evident that schools still need additional resources in order to continue to address the ongoing mental health and well -being needs, as well as the social emotional learning needs of students. These emerging needs are evident in the data including the significant increase in Social Work referrals,

safe and caring school data, and the needs identified by Administrators and Superintendents across the TDSB.

Child and Youth Workers

A Child and Youth Worker (CYW) may be utilized to do group work, to provide behaviour management recommendations to teachers, to create behaviour management programs, to support School Improvement Plans, and to support equity and health and wellbeing plans. They can also do Life Space Interventions supporting mental health issues (including intervention counselling), issues of family/peer relationships, interactions with teachers and peers as well as assisting students in developing life skills and social skills.

Currently the 50 Student Resource Services Child and Youth Workers (SRS CYW) support all Secondary Schools 2.5 days a week. Increasing the number of SRS CYW's would provide differential supports to Secondary Schools who are in need. The additional SRS CYW's would be flexible and would respond to the needs in school communities addressing emerging student Mental Health and Well-Being needs, providing intentional culturally responsive groups, supporting Mental Health and Well-Being capacity building in school communities and Social Emotional Learning.

This increase would include:

- 35 additional Child and Youth Workers

Itinerant Child and Youth Counsellors

An increase in the number of Child and Youth Counselors (ICYC) over the current complement of 8 ICYC's (2 per each LC) would enhance mental health differentiating supports that are flexible and responsive to Elementary Schools experiencing trauma and supporting ongoing emerging mental health and well being needs of school communities in collaboration with the Professional Support Staff (PSS) such as Social Workers. ICYC's supports include enhancing social and emotional learning by providing culturally responsive group work, individual and whole school based supports. An additional 15 ICYC's can provide additional support and respond to the unique needs of school communities with an increase of 2 ICYC's per Learning Center to 7 -8 ICYC's per Learning Center. ICYC's promote positive school climate, mental health and wellbeing by offering a broad range of services which may include the following:

- Short term goal oriented culturally responsive individual and group counselling that support social emotional learning.
- Support mental health and wellness for students, staff, and community
- Collaborate with Social Work to support tragic incidents and crises.
- Promote & support student engagement
- Build Capacity and Inclusion through an Equity lens

- Facilitate transition support
- Develop and facilitate specialized programs and initiatives and professional development
- Implement restorative practices, leadership programs, and clubs to enhance belonging
- Online office hours for student support with varied topics including coping and stress reduction, social media and digital citizenship, anti-oppression and anti-racism, building relationships and reducing conflicts, and wellbeing

This increase would include:

- 15 additional Itinerant Child and Youth Counsellors

Social Workers

Currently there are 118 Social Workers in TDSB and of those 10 Social Workers are on short term leave. Increasing the number of Social Workers would provide the additional support needed to address the increase in emerging mental health and social emotional learning issues over the past few months of this school year. Such an increase would also allow more time to build mental health capacities in school communities through more culturally responsive mental health and counseling groups (tier 1 and tier 2).

This increase would include:

- 10 Social Workers to fill in for those on short term medical leave
- 6 new Social work positions to the system

Having Social Workers to fill these 10 on short term leaves is needed as other Social Workers have added those schools to their workload.

Adding 6 NEW Social Work positions to the system would lessen the number of Elementary Schools each Social Worker is assigned to, allowing more time in school spaces to support in the building of Mental Health, Well Being for students and staff.

School Based Safety Monitors

Currently there are 163.5 School Based Safety Monitors (SBSM's) allocated throughout the system including 11.5 in elementary schools and 152 in secondary school.

To address school related safety concerns and to ensure more caring adults in the school to support the mental health and well being of students, an additional allocation of 40 School Based Safety Monitors is being requested.

This increase would include:

- 40 additional School Based Safety Monitors

Resource Implications

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Costing of Additional Allocation (for balance of school year)

Position	FTE	Amount
Social Workers	16	\$1.3M
Child and Youth Workers	35	\$1.9M
Child and Youth Counsellors	15	\$1.1M
School Based Safety Monitors	40	\$1.6M
Total	106	\$5.9M

In order to ensure that we have a diverse staff that offer support and resources to students that are culturally responsive to the lived experiences of the students, every attempt will be made to hire staff with similar lived experiences or training in culturally responsive practices.

Second Half Year COVID Funding:

The Ministry of Education announced that the second half of the COVID-19 support funds would be available to school boards, last week. Outlined below is a breakdown of these funds. Staff are continuing to review the needs across the system to determine and allocate additional resources to support schools.

School Operations - to support additional costs of cleaning and ventilation	\$1.9M
Student Transportation - to support additional costs of transportation and cleaning during pandemic	\$2.0M
Staffing Supports (School based) - to support additional staffing in schools during pandemic	\$15.8M
Special Education and Mental Health- to support additional staffing and other resources during the pandemic	\$1.5M
Total	\$21.2M

Communications Considerations

N/A

Board Policy and Procedure Reference(s)

N/A

Appendices

- Appendix A: TDSB Covid-19 Pandemic Recovery Plan

From

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